UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/22156
28 January 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 28 JANUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Further to my two letters of 21 January (S/22115 and S/22117), I have the honour to communicate to you a further report on operations in the Gulf pursuant to operative paragraph 2 of resolution 678 (1990).

Our overall aim throughout has been, in the words of the British Chief of Defence Staff, "to attack the Iraqi war machine so that it no longer casts its dark shadow over Kuwait and allows us to liberate Kuwait in accordance with the wishes of the United Nations". This has required detailed planning and meticulous execution, bearing in mind that Iraq has one of the largest armies in the world. The military objectives during the second week of operations have been to break down the intricate command network of the Iraqi armed forces, to disrupt and degrade their air defence system and thereby to gain air superiority. The attack has also concentrated on Iraq's unconventional weapons capabilities and against a whole spectrum of Iraqi military infrastructure targets which help sustain the occupation of Kuwait.

The results have been as follows. The SCUD threat has been reduced by attacks on Iraqi fixed and mobile launchers. Main Iraqi military airfields have been damaged and their capacity has been reduced. The Iraqi airforce has been so severely attacked that it has been unable to operate against allied air operations. Iraqi military command and control has been severely damaged and increasingly Iraq has moved to alternative, less effective means of communication. Iraq's ability to sustain a war has been steadily reduced. Oil refining capacity, which has been specifically targetted with the objective of reducing Iraq's military sustainability, has been reduced by 50 per cent. Operations continue against Iraq's chemical and biological warfare installations, production and storage capability. There has been disruption and harassment of Iraq's land army in the theatre of operations particularly orientated towards her command and control and logistical assets. The entire campaign has been conducted against military infrastructure with the express directions to avoid causing civilian casualties as far as possible, and with specific briefing to avoid sites of cultural and historic significance.

As the Secretary of State for Defence said in the House of Commons on 20 January, we have made the strongest representations again to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the representatives of which have been here seeking access to Iraqis who have been detained to ensure that they are receiving proper treatment. They were naturally granted access and we gave them every opportunity, to which they are entitled, to visit Iraqis to see whether they are receiving proper treatment. We have insisted that similar facilities must be available to representatives of the International Red Cross in Baghdad.

The ICRC team confirmed at the end of their visit that the United Kingdom in the UK was complying with the Geneva Conventions as regards Prisoners of War and civilian detainees.

There was also an ICRC visit to facilities for prisoners of war in Riyadh. They were able to see there the provision made for the sick and wounded, and the arrangements to discharge our obligations under the Geneva Conventions.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) D. H. A. HANNAY